

also, though not quite so definitely as in the former group, irritability and debility of the nervous system could be traced to early infancy.

These numerous investigations and direct observations established a certainty of congenital predisposition to nervous troubles. At the first commencement of menstruation, dysmenorrhœa occurred, and chlorosis was only exceptionally absent. The most frequent complications were relaxation of the uterine ligaments, softness and flabbiness of the uterus, catarrh of the several apparatus, in consequence of defective nutrition. In some cases psychical influences, in others masturbation, imperfect coitus, etc., have been assigned as a cause. Occasionally local affections of the sexual system are the direct cause of nervous troubles, as well as other injurious influences, such as depraved nutrition, loss of blood, etc. Diseases of the sexual organs that last for years may and do lead to grave general nervous disturbances.—*London Medical Record*, Nov. 15, 1887.

L. F. B.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

ON THE CONCEPTION OF HYSTERIA. (Weber den Begriff der Hysterie.) By P. J. Möbius (*Centralblatt für Nervenheilkunde, etc.*, February 1, 1888).

Dr. Möbius, in calling attention to the various conceptions of this affection by medical men, takes exception to the name as misleading, and asserts that physicians are beginning to form a more unanimous idea of the character of this affection.

The first step towards this is in the recognition of the fact that this disease is a psychosis, or rather that the essential, the primary change is a morbid condition of the *psyche*. But inasmuch as some cases occur (especially in males) in which no demonstrable disturbance of the psychical functions is present, the essential characteristic may be found in the somatic symptoms. He says: "All those changes of the body are hysterical which are pro-

duced by the imagination." He adds that every child knows that the imagination may cause bodily changes, and gives as examples, crying, laughing, blushing, the secretion of saliva, vomiting from disgust, sweating from dread, collapse from fear, paralysis of movement from fright, etc., etc. The hysterical state consists equally in the fact that just as these changes may be produced to a greater or less degree by this cause, so may the fancy call forth somatic disturbances, which are not noticed in the healthy, e. g., hemianæsthesia. In many cases the form of the somatic disturbance has no direct relation to the causative fancy. But the character of the latter may determine the former to that extent that the attention may be directed to definite regions of the body. Thus a slight injury to the shoulder may be the occasion of awakening a severe injury to the arm—an hysterical paralysis of the arm may be the result. Most probably such a relationship is of more frequent occurrence than would appear on first thought."

Experience teaches that hysterical phenomena are often produced and as often destroyed by conceptions, and especially by those emotional phases connected with such conceptions. The experience gained from hypnotism in general, and especially the results of the phenomena of suggestion by means of which nearly all hysterical symptoms may be called forth at pleasure are on that account of much scientific value, because they throw light upon the existence of hysteria.

He continues to state that one might think that the definition of hysteria did not sufficiently limit it in reference to the phenomena of a healthy individual. But such a limit is not necessary. Hysteria is indeed the diseased increase of a condition which is present in everybody. "Everybody is, so to speak, a little hysterical."

Hence, in its practical aspect, the only therapeutics which can be applied for its alleviation must be psychical.

N. E. B.